This committee was responsible for assessing the needs and demands of postgraduate studies. It was to make recommendations to improve and encourage the growth of master’s and doctoral level education and to enhance programs that improve job performance and career opportunities. The committee's analysis will include evaluation of: doctoral program needs and the demands of the regional community, other graduate and professional certificate programs, infrastructure requirements, research support, workforce linkages, and continuing professional education. It also analyzed the feasibility of pharmacy, architecture, law, and medicine programs at UTEP.
Attracting a diverse student body to the University’s graduate and professional development programs will help give UTEP international prominence.

Introduction

The Graduate and Professional Development Programs Committee was charged with examining a wide range of issues associated with advanced educational opportunities in the El Paso region, including development of doctoral, master’s, and certificate programs that meet regional workforce, infrastructure, and research needs and that provide continuing professional education opportunities to the region’s population. The Committee reviewed the current state of graduate and professional education and research at UTEP, looked at approaches to graduate/professional education at other universities, developed and implemented a pilot survey of regional employers, and met periodically to examine strategies for the development of graduate and professional programs over the next decade.

Findings

UTEP is poised to become a top-tier university, uniquely prepared to address critical national and international issues through advanced research and educational programs, while at the same time serving as a powerful driver of regional economic and social development. During the past 15 years, the University has made substantial strides in the development of master’s and especially doctoral degree programs. These programs provide vital opportunities for people in the region and draw extremely talented students from elsewhere in the United States, Mexico, and other countries. In addition, professional education programs successfully address important regional workforce needs. By 2014, graduate education will be much more the norm for preparation in a wide range of fields, and UTEP must be prepared to meet that challenge and demand. There are a number of areas in which UTEP might develop new programs, but it is critical that the University continually reevaluate its offerings so that its graduate and professional programs can address needs and opportunities as they arise. The decisions that are made during the next several years concerning academic and professional program development will largely shape the UTEP of 2014 and determine whether or not UTEP will realize its potential as a major research and educational institution in the U.S.-Mexico Border region.

The Committee members identified two broad objectives:

• The development of UTEP graduate and professional programs must be closely linked to current and potential regional workforce needs and economic development goals.
• There should be a strategy in place to ensure that UTEP’s new and existing graduate programs become nationally and internationally recognized to establish UTEP as a world-class university.

Key Objectives

• UTEP will be a nationally recognized leader in graduate programs relating to the U.S.-Mexico border (broadly defined to include cross-cultural and international issues).
• As a major minority institution, UTEP will be at the forefront
nationally in the creation of graduate education opportunities for Hispanics and other minorities and will be regarded as a national leader in higher education issues related to diversity and inclusion.

**Recommendations:**

- Promote interdisciplinary programs such as environmental science, border health, and international business that address key fields from the perspective of UTEP’s strengths.
- Aggressively pursue partnerships with other universities and institutions such as Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT) to build strength in border-related programs.
- Introduce courses and certificate programs related to the border (including foreign language study) to complement and enhance existing programs across the disciplines.
- Develop model programs to encourage Mexican-Americans and other minority students to pursue graduate education.
- Consider securing the services of a consulting firm or external advisors to determine the program areas that should be emphasized and the best strategies for achieving excellence and recognition.

- UTEP doctoral programs (and master’s programs in key areas) will achieve national recognition for excellence.

**Recommendations:**

- Recruit the faculty now who have or will have the qualifications to bring national recognition to graduate programs by 2014.
- Consider the reorganization of academic and research programs into new units to promote collaboration and facilitate branding.
- Plan and launch a broad campaign for national and international prominence, particularly in research and graduate programs.
- Focus capital fundraising activities on creating endowments to support graduate fellowships and research professorships.
- Create an external advisory board or committee to assist in evaluating programs and in developing plans for the initiation of new programs. The Board might be made up of representatives of existing College advisory boards and include other appropriate members, such as graduate administrators or faculty from other institutions. Attention should be paid to building ongoing links with critical corporate partners.
- Introduce a sufficient number of doctoral programs to guarantee UTEP recognition as a research university.
- Be competitive with other graduate programs in funding and other resources provided, in order to recruit outstanding students nationally and internationally.

- UTEP will be recognized in the El Paso-Cd. Juárez border region, in Texas, and in the Southwest as a key driving force for building a knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce to create and sustain economic and social development.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish a culture of dynamic creativity and flexibility in the provision of advanced educational opportunities, including integrating professional and graduate education, providing licensure and other professional certifications and training, and experimenting with non-traditional course timing and delivery formulas.
- Undertake an “environmental scan,” in collaboration with regional employer groups, to ascertain program needs.

Linking programs to regional workforce needs and establishing UTEP as a world-class university are top priorities for the Graduate and Professional Development Programs Committee.
This should be repeated in some form on a regular basis, possibly every four years.

- Lead an alliance of employers and higher education institutions in the region, including southern New Mexico and Cd. Juárez, to provide a coordinated response to advanced workforce needs.
- Pursue partnerships, both regionally and beyond, to develop new programs and enhance existing ones. Potential partners include other universities, major laboratories, and corporations with parallel or complementary interests. Potential local partners include Texas Tech, Fort Bliss, El Paso Community College, and universities in Chihuahua.
- Consider strategic academic/professional program development in some key areas, such as urban planning (where there is currently a certificate program), construction management, human resources, hospitality, border health, health professions, software engineering, and homeland security.
- Substantially increase awareness of UTEP programs among employers and potential students.

Advanced education efforts will complement and enhance UTEP’s research initiatives, including border security, international business, health disparities, environment, education, and emerging technologies.

**Recommendations:**

- The creation of a four-year medical school in El Paso represents a very important opportunity for collaboration and for the development of joint and linked programs in health-related areas, including joint M.D.-Ph.D. programs. Plans should be made to capitalize on this opportunity.

Sally A. Hurt Steffen and Chantel Crews discussed recommendations to establish UTEP as a recognized leader in graduate programs relating to the U.S.-Mexico border.

- Projected rapid growth of Fort Bliss represents an important opportunity for the development of graduate programs, research activities, and a variety of partnerships. Plans should be made to capitalize on this opportunity.
- The development of professional schools, such as law, pharmacy, or urban planning, might be desirable for the growth of the University, if there is demonstrated community support and sufficient resources are available to create programs of the highest quality.
- The development of doctoral and research master’s programs should be closely linked to defined University research objectives and should support regional economic development where possible.

Master’s and doctoral programs should be closely linked to UTEP’s goal of becoming a top-tier research university while serving as a powerful driver of regional economic and social development.